

St Laurence Church Junior School

Bunbury Road, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2DJ

Inspection dates 5–6 June 2014

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Good teaching, with some that is outstanding, helps pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils are now achieving good standards in their work.
- Teachers make accurate checks on how well each pupil is doing. They use this information well to provide pupils with work that helps them learn effectively.
- Teachers are regularly held accountable for the progress of the pupils in their classes. This ensures all pupil groups achieve well.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Almost all have positive views about their school.
- Pupils enjoy school and feel safe.
- School leaders regularly carry out detailed checks on the quality of teaching and learning. They use this information to good effect to improve the quality of teaching.
- Governors have good levels of involvement with the school. They challenge senior leaders effectively to provide a good education for all pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress in writing is not as good as that in reading and mathematics. Handwriting and the presentation of pupils work are sometimes untidy.
- Teachers' comments in the marking of work are not always clear enough to help pupils improve.
- Not all teachers have a clear idea of what makes teaching outstanding through sharing excellent practice.
- Very occasionally, teaching is not fully effective in engaging the attention all pupils.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils, including the very highest attaining, to write at length and in different styles in subjects other than English.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons. Eight lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with governors, the senior leadership team, subject leaders, and pupils. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority and an independent consultant who works with the school.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses, and the data it collects on pupils' progress. An in-depth scrutiny of Year 3 writing was conducted to check the school's baseline assessments. Documents detailing the school's arrangements for safeguarding were reviewed.
- Questionnaire responses from 25 members of staff were analysed.
- Inspectors took account of the 95 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. In addition, inspectors looked at the results of the school's most recent questionnaire, giving the views of 85 parents.
- Two inspectors talked to parents at the end of the school day. An inspector met with and had telephone conversations with parents. Inspectors took account of nine letters written by parents.

Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Olivia Roth

Additional Inspector

Suha Ahmad

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than the average-sized junior school.
- The large majority of pupils are White British. The proportion who come from a range of minority ethnic groups is average. Fewer than average speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is average. In this school, the additional funding is for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- Throughout the school, pupils are taught in ability groups for English and mathematics.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching by:
 - sharpening comments in the marking of pupils' work to improve learning further
 - enabling teachers to observe the outstanding teaching already in the school in order to improve their own practice
 - ensuring that all activities fully engage pupils at all times.
- Improve pupils' achievement in writing in order to raise standards by:
 - improving pupils' handwriting and the presentation of their written work in all subjects
 - increasing opportunities for writing in different subjects
 - offering opportunities for pupils working at the very highest level to write in a range of different text styles.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The school's detailed analysis of pupil's progress, based on their initial assessments of attainment shortly after pupils join the school, shows that pupils achieve well. In the end of key stage 2 tests and assessments in 2013, the school's own assessments of pupils abilities show pupils achieved well in reading and mathematics. Although still good, achievement in writing was weaker.
- The school sets high expectations for pupils' progress and proportions of pupils now achieving or exceeding the school's targets are high. Pupils in all teaching groups in each year are currently making good progress. Pupils consistently make good progress in reading and mathematics, but in writing it is more variable across the teaching sets.
- Progress in reading is good because it is taught well. Pupils develop secure reading skills. Their phonic (letters and the sounds they make) skills are both consolidated and further improved. They build a good understanding of phonics and use them well to work out how to read unfamiliar words. Group reading helps pupils build good comprehension skills so they have a clear understanding of what they are reading. Teachers link the teaching of phonics closely to spelling to effectively improve this aspect of pupils' language development.
- Pupils develop good understanding across all areas of mathematics. They have secure numeracy skills and are able to deal with mental calculations, both quickly and accurately. Their skills are developed well and older pupils are adept at working out strategies to solve problems. Younger pupils have a sound grasp of shape and space and are able to classify shapes by using different criteria, including angles and the number of sides.
- Pupils writing skills are improving. Pupils are beginning to write at length and use expressive language such as 'We will explode with good ideas.' to make their writing interesting. They are becoming skilled at writing first drafts and then improving them through checking and identifying where they can make their writing better. Tasks that are focused on grammar and spelling help improve pupils' writing techniques. However, pupils' handwriting is sometimes untidy and written work is not presented neatly enough.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress against their specific targets and in reading, writing and mathematics because of the effective and targeted support they receive.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well. The small number of pupils at the early stages of learning English soon acquire enough English to access the full curriculum. From this point they make good progress and their attainment at least matches that of other pupils.
- The most able pupils make good progress. The proportions achieving the higher level 5 by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013 was similar to the national average in reading and mathematics and in grammar, punctuation and spelling. In writing it was below the national average. This represents good progress from their starting points in reading and mathematics but requires improvement in writing. Inspection evidence shows that this year the most able pupils are making rapid progress and working at levels much higher than nationally expected for their age, including in writing.
- Pupils supported by pupil premium funding make similar progress as other pupils. In 2013

qualifying pupils were about a year and a half behind others in reading, two terms in writing and about a year behind in mathematics. Currently the progress for pupil premium pupils remains similar to non-qualifying pupils and attainment is about a year behind. The attainment of pupils supported through the pupil premium is similar to that of non-qualifying pupils nationally so the attainment gap is closing.

- The school uses its primary sports funding to improve the already excellent provision and high standards in physical education and games. The funding has been used to purchase equipment to broaden pupils' experiences even further and improve their skills in a wider range of sports, develop outdoor learning such as orienteering and to increase the number of pupils achieving the expected 25 meter standard in swimming. Professional development for teachers enables pupils to further improve sports and physical skills.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils' learn best when teachers adjust the levels of challenge according to pupils' learning needs. In a Year 5 cross-curricular lesson, pupils designed an obstacle course. Pupils worked extremely well in groups and were making excellent progress, so the teacher added more challenge; the course needed to make their hearts beat faster. Pupils then had to re-think. This work extended pupils' thinking and problem solving skills very well so they made excellent progress.
- Expectations of pupils' learning are consistently high. Pupils at all levels of ability are given tasks that make them think hard and which move their learning on at a fast pace. Pupils are aware that teachers expect them to do well and therefore try very hard. For example, in a set for lower attaining, younger pupils, they were asked to make sentences more interesting by describing how someone performed an action. Pupils did exceptionally well going beyond what they were initially intended to learn. The teacher immediately used examples of excellence to encourage other pupils and the overall progress of pupils was outstanding.
- Teachers make learning interesting. They combine different subjects into interesting activities that are effective in developing pupils learning skills. They encourage pupils to ask questions and are skilled at asking questions to make pupils think things out for themselves. Tasks are accessible to all pupils. Even though there are four ability sets in each year group for English and mathematics, teachers plan work at three different levels within each set. This means that tasks enable pupils to move forward with confidence.
- Teachers and school leaders are rigorous in managing pupils' behaviour. There is a behaviour management policy which is uniformly implemented and as a result, pupils are largely able to learn free from distraction. Year 3 pupils like school because 'behaviour is stricter, we know what to do now and how to behave'. Most parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire feel the school makes sure pupils behave well.
- Teaching assistants support pupils' learning well. They support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs effectively so they make the same good progress as other pupils. Some are especially skilled in supporting pupils' emotional well-being and behaviour or those on the autistic spectrum. They have a significant impact in such areas. Not all parents agree and a very few remain discontented with the school's support for their children. There is an equal number who are delighted with the support given by the school and report the remarkable progress their children are making.
- Pupils' work is marked regularly and the policy is applied consistently across the school so pupils are aware of the marking style. However comments do not always help pupils improve.

- There are occasions when teachers benefit from the expertise of other staff. However, there is still some untapped opportunity to share excellent practice, so that teachers have a clear idea of what makes teaching outstanding.
- Very occasionally, teachers' introductions to lessons or explanations of what pupils are learning are over-complicated so that pupils lose concentration. At these times, behaviour is not disruptive, but pupils can become disengaged.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have positive attitudes and approach their learning with enthusiasm. They are mostly self-motivated to improve and try to do their very best. Pupils enjoy school; their attendance is well above average each year. They arrive to school punctually.
- Older pupils are aware of their responsibilities to school and take them seriously. A group of Year 6 pupils heard that some boys had made uncomplimentary comments about the school to an inspector. Their unsolicited response was 'We need to do something about this.' They requested a meeting with the lead inspector to put an opposite viewpoint. These pupils and many others are proud of their school and speak highly of it.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe at school and say that any issues that worry them are dealt with promptly and effectively. They show a good understanding of internet safety.
- Pupils are mostly aware of the different forms bullying can take. A few say that there is sometimes confusion between bullying and one-off arguments. They say bullying does happen, but it is sorted out by teachers. Pupils know what to do if they ever need help.
- Behaviour is not outstanding overall because, although it is often outstanding in class and the large majority are very well behaved at all times, the behaviour of a few still has to be managed by adults. The school uses exclusion as a last resort. Records and case studies show these have been for valid reasons.

The leadership and management are good

- The quality of teaching and learning is rigorously checked by senior leaders. Lesson observations, work scrutiny and drop-in observations take place regularly. Teachers are expected to account for the progress of their pupils in pupil progress meetings. Leaders have taken robust action to improve the quality of teaching and learning and as a result, it has improved since the previous inspection so that teaching is now good.
- A close watch is kept on the progress of all pupils. The school initially assesses their starting points soon after they join the school to establish the levels at which to plan each pupil's work. From their initial assessment, leaders check progress carefully to ensure pupils make good and some, excellent progress.
- Leadership at all levels is strong. Senior and subject leaders work together to promote a culture of challenge, high aspirations, and team work. The headteacher and governors have made sure that those taking over new responsibility roles are well skilled to step in.
- Leadership of special educational needs support is good. Small group and one-to-one support is

well organised and closely matched to the needs of each pupil. Progress is checked regularly to ensure effective quality and good pupil achievement.

- The curriculum is carefully planned to meet the pupils' interests. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing literacy skills and mathematics, although opportunities for pupils to write in different styles and in different subjects are not yet fully embedded. The curriculum makes good links between subjects so learning is meaningful and enjoyable. There is a vibrant extra-curricular offer with a variety of learning experiences to engage pupils across a wide range of activities, sporting and otherwise. This is a key factor in promoting pupils' positive attitudes to learning.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Through responsibilities, pupils' social understanding is developed well. Good social and moral development is shown by the way pupils of different ages and backgrounds get on well and their good behaviour. They develop a sense of fairness and appreciate achievement through taking part in a wide range of out-of-school activities. The school actively celebrates a range of cultures, encouraging a healthy respect amongst pupils from different backgrounds.
- Pupil premium funding is used appropriately to improve the progress of individual qualifying pupils through funding them to attend school clubs and trips to give equality of opportunity and deploying extra staff to provide one-to-one or small group support.
- The school has made effective arrangements for spending the primary sports funding to improve and widen the already excellent sporting opportunities on offer. It is directed to improving swimming for Year 3 and Year 4 pupils, providing equipment for pupils to take part in an even wider range of sports activities, including orienteering and to improve teachers' expertise.
- The local authority has been involved in moves to strengthen transition arrangements and to raise the school's profile amongst the parent community. The support provided by the local authority is appropriate to need. They have put the school in touch with national leaders in education for advice and support. They have started a local group to support the specific needs of junior schools, with which the headteacher and deputy headteacher are fully engaging.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Members of the governing body systematically challenge senior leaders over the effectiveness of the school. They are knowledgeable and able to ask searching questions to hold senior leaders accountable. They support school leaders fully in dealing with important issues. Although they have done their very best, there are still transition issues remaining
 - Governors visit school regularly to decide for themselves how well it is doing. They have a good knowledge of how well teachers are doing their jobs through first-hand experiences and through discussions with senior staff. They fully support the headteacher in dealing with sensitive staffing issues
 - Through training, governors develop their own skills well in order to support and strengthen leadership and management. They are fully aware of how the achievement of pupils compares with other schools
 - Governors set clear targets in managing the performance of the headteacher and staff, making sure teachers' pay increases link to competence
 - Statutory requirements are met, including those for safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 103416 |
| Local authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 426933 |

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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| Type of school | Junior |
| School category | Voluntary aided |
| Age range of pupils | 7–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 353 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Jacqui Townsend |
| Headteacher | Jane Lindsay |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 January 2012 |
| Telephone number | 0121 464 6499 |
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